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In order to collect data supportive of the development of new curriculum and curriculum materials for use in the preparation of teachers to work with disadvantaged children, a study was conducted to determine the type and extent of problems perceived by teachers as they teach in inner-city or "ghetto" schools. Each of 12 school district superintendents from the 17 largest U.S. cities identified an elementary school attended by many disadvantaged children; then principals of those schools selected randomly two teachers at each grade level to provide information (over a 10-day period) to be used in the construction of an instrument entitled, "My Biggest Problem Today Inventory." Three doctoral assistants synthesized the approximately 1,400 critical incidents into 184 somewhat different problem statements which served as the basis for construction of a 184-item instrument, "The Teacher Problem Inventory" (TPI), which requests respondents to consider each problem statement in terms of its frequency of occurrence and its severity. The TPI was then administered to all 287 K-6 teachers in the cooperating schools (Major results of the data analysis are appended: (1) chi square values for the 96 problems significant on either the frequency or severity scales or both, (2) frequency percentages and rank orders for the 45 significant problems reported by more than 1/3 of the respondents as either frequent or severe or both, (3) the 37 major problems grouped under nine categories.) (JS)

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THE IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF PERCEIVED PROBLEMS OF TEACHERS IN INNER-CITY SCHOOLS

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Knoxville, Tennessee
1967

This study developed from the participation of the University of Tennessee in the Inter-Institutional Program Development (IPD) Project of the NDEA National Institute for Advanced Study in Teaching Disadvantaged Youth.

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the type and extent of problems perceived by teachers as they teach in inner-city or "ghetto" schools. The project was undertaken in order to collect basic data supportive of the development of new curriculums and curriculum materials for use in preparing teachers to work with disadvantaged children.

Rationale for the Study

As noted by Rivlin, "Teaching is difficult, and teaching people to teach in an urban school is one of the most difficult of all kinds of teaching." [1] Unfortunately, according to Egerton,[2] the majority of teacher preparation programs is not even marginally concerned with or directed toward readying teachers for urban inner-city school experiences, even though eighty percent of America's population now live in 321 metropolitan communities.[3] By their own admission, the 281 colleges and universities responding [to Egerton] indicated that they have been doing very little to prepare their graduates to work with disadvantaged children. Less than one in six has made any substantial change in curriculum for this purpose and only two in five institutions have any intention of doing so in the future.

The Egerton findings further indicate that teacher education, especially at the preservice level, has not yet been affected significantly by the current national need for and interest in preparing teachers for work with disadvantaged children.

At least one reason underlying the training institutions' lack of interest, unwillingness, or inability to act, is the absence of a data base upon which to build the needed programs. For example, although many arti-

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[1] Rivlin, Harry N. "A New Pattern for Urban Teacher Education." *Journal of Teacher Education* 17:177-184; Summer 1966.

[2] Egerton, John. "Survey: A Lack of Preparation in the Colleges." *Southern Education Report* 2:2-13; April 1967.

[3] It is estimated that by 1990 the population of these areas will double.

cles and books have been written about the disadvantaged and their characteristics, little, if anything, has been done at the public school classroom level to identify and to document the specific and real problems teachers face on a day-to-day basis.[4]

As a result, teacher-training institutions have no substantive information about what it is that makes teaching the disadvantaged so difficult. Teacher educators who have had little or no experience in disadvantaged settings must draw upon secondhand accounts published by other teacher educators who also may have had little direct experiential background. Milner concurs:

> It is little wonder, then, that most teachers are totally unprepared for the "reality shock" of the inner-city classroom. Nothing in their own background or in their preparation for teaching readies them to deal with disadvantaged pupils whose life styles, attitudes, values, mores, home and neighborhood environments, and patterns of behavior and speech are so vastly different—indeed alien—to anything the teachers have known or experienced.[5]

This study is an attempt to assemble some basic data that will provide a clearer picture of the difficulties confronted by the teacher of the disadvantaged child. Such data should provide information that will facilitate the development of curriculums and curriculum materials for use in preparing teachers to work with disadvantaged children.

Method of the Study

The seventeen cities in the United States with largest pupil enrollments were identified. A letter was addressed to each superintendent of schools in these cities (excepting Honolulu, Hawaii) requesting cooperation by (a) identifying an elementary school in which many educationally disadvantaged children were located, and (b) asking the principal of that elementary school to select randomly two teachers at each grade level who in turn would provide information to be used in the construction of an instrument entitled "My Biggest Problem Today Inventory" (MBPTI).[6]

Twelve of the sixteen school systems responded, nominating fourteen elementary schools to participate.[7] A procedure was provided for the use of each participating principal in selecting teachers who would respond to the MBPTI.

The MBPTI solicited three kinds of information. First, teacher respondents were asked to describe the school incident which caused them the greatest concern each day for ten successive days. Second, respondents were requested to react to the stated incident on a numerical continuum (1-6) to four sets of polar adjectives: *normal-abnormal; simple-complex; solvable-insolvable; slightly frustrating-extremely upsetting*. Third, respondents were asked to place each reported incident in one of these problem categories: planning; teaching or methodology; student behavior; parent relationship; personal, teacher or administrator relationship; evaluation. An *other* category was available for write-in responses.

Three doctoral assistants made a jury analysis of the critical incidents thus collected (approximately 1400). Inspection of the incidents indicated that they might be synthesized into 184 somewhat different problem statements, such as:

1. Having trouble eliminating repeated pupil absences or tardinesses;
2. Handling excessively large classes;
3. Dealing with children who arrive at school wet, or who stay home because of inclement weather;
4. Helping a child with a social adjustment problem;
5. Dealing with attachment of a child to a teacher as a result of rejection or lack of affection at home.

This initial analysis and synthesis served as the basis for construction of an 184-item inventory called "The Teacher Problem Inventory" (TPI). The TPI requested respondents to consider each problem statement in terms of (a) its frequency of occurrence (*often; occasionally; never*) and (b) its severity (*serious; minor; no problem*). Field visits were made to the participating schools, during which time the total faculties at these schools (287 teachers, grades K-6) responded to the TPI.

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[4] A rather exhaustive library study was able to locate only one related report.

[5] Milner, Ernest J. "Preparing Teachers for Urban School—The Syracuse Program." *Clearing House on Urban Teacher Education Report* (CUTER) 2:1,8-10; Spring 1966. (Washington, D. C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.)

[6] Much of the MBPTI derived from suggestions made by Dr. Kenneth Fishell of Syracuse University.

[7] Participating school systems: Atlanta, Cleveland, District of Columbia, Houston, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, New York City, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. Student populations among the schools varied greatly in racial and national composition. For example, certain populations were almost all Negro and Puerto Rican, while others were predominantly Mexican. All schools were located geographically in a central city environment.

A chi-square analysis of the data collected using the TPI (N=287) was made in which the expected frequency was determined by the over-all responses on each scale (frequency and severity). The analysis was intended to determine at the .01 level of confidence, which of the 184 problems were significantly different from the over-all trend of problems reported on each scale or on both scales. Of the 184 items, 96 were significant on either the frequency or severity scales (see Appendix B: Table II, columns 1 and 2). Of the 96 significant items, 80 were significant on both the frequency and severity scales (see Appendix B: Table II, column 3). Only those significant problems weighted in the direction of the *often* or *serious* categories are reported.

Next, those incidents reported by more than one-third of the respondents as occurring most frequently *(often)* were determined (see Appendix B: Table I, column 1). Similarly, significant problems reported by more than one-third of the respondents as being most severe *(serious)* were determined (see Appendix B: Table I, column 3).[8]

The 45 significant items reported by more than one-third of the respondents as either frequent or severe, or both, provide a nucleus of significantly frequent and serious problems as reported by teachers teaching in inner-city schools. For analytic purposes, the 45 problems were reduced to 37[9] and placed arbitrarily into nine categories:

1. Problems which seem to involve disruptive or disturbing student behavior
2. Problems which seem to arise out of student home conditions
3. Problems of parent-school relationships
4. Problems of working with the exceptional child
5. Problems of providing for individual differences
6. Problems of child-to-child relationships
7. Problems of building skills in independent work
8. Problems of school conditions
9. Problems of the child's self and self-concept

A list of the 45 problems so categorized appears as Appendix A.

[8] Rank orders for each group of problems are given in columns 2 and 4, respectively.

[9] Several problems seemed quite similar and were, therefore, combined.

Results and Implications of the Study

The results of the study identify problems very real to classroom teachers teaching disadvantaged children in inner-city schools. The problems reported are those perceived by teachers themselves. These problems do not constitute a definitive list; it is conceivable that administrators or parents might document other problems. However, if these problems are accepted as reflecting the "real world" of teaching the disadvantaged, it seems logical that they be used in some way in preservice and in-service programs.

Preparation institutions have few means available at present to convey such realities to teachers in training. Even the direct experience of student teaching is seldom appropriate or sufficient when this experience occurs in middle-class schools. More carefully designed and controlled direct experiences with the disadvantaged are needed. In addition, simulated experiences, which admit of more careful design and control than direct experiences, need to be developed.

A phase of the study not reported herein asked the respondents to indicate how preparation institutions might better prepare teachers to work in such settings. In general, and in support of previous remarks, most comments indicated a need for more direct experience with disadvantaged children in schools in low socio-economic environments. Most were concerned with reducing the "reality shock."

The survey data deserve additional analysis. For example, problems could be determined by grade level, national or racial composition of students, teacher experience, teacher age, and the like. It should be noted that the problem statements were collected during early spring; another set of problems might be reported at the beginning of a school year. Too, factor analysis of the problems might reveal more appropriate or overriding problem areas. Finally, it should be emphasized that the final determination of the problem statements to the TPI was made by only three persons. It is therefore subject to greater error than if a larger jury with established inter-rater reliability had been employed.

APPENDIX A

PROBLEMS REPORTED BY MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF RESPONDENTS AS FREQUENT AND SEVERE

Problems of Disruptive or Disturbing Student Behavior

1. Finding satisfactory methods of disciplining children.
2. Dealing with children who want attention and will do anything to get it.
3. Handling children who won't obey teacher's directions or orders.
4. Getting children to keep clean and to take an interest in their personal appearance.
5. Dealing with children who do not care if they receive poor grades.
6. Handling children who misbehave when left unsupervised for short periods of time.
7. Helping children keep track of their school supplies and personal possessions.
8. Dealing with children not motivated to work.
9. Dealing with children who don't listen to, remember, or follow instructions.
10. Handling children unable to differentiate between fact and fantasy.
11. Handling children who refuse to do classwork, or find other ways to get out of it.
12. Dealing with children who rebel or deliberately try to upset the teacher.
13. Dealing with children who associate with other children who are a poor influence.

Problems of Student Home Conditions

1. Dealing with children who have limited or unsatisfactory experiences in the home.
2. Helping children who suffer from overcrowded, cramped home conditions.
3. Compensating for lack of materials in the home available for children to read or to use in doing homework or schoolwork.
4. Knowing what to do about children who have been mistreated at home.
5. Dealing with children who are upset by some home incident.
6. Dealing with children who come to school without proper food or sleep.

Problems of Parent-School Relationships

1. Helping parents who say that they can't control their children at home.
2. Dealing with parents who won't respond to report cards or requests for parent conferences.
3. Dealing with parents not interested in their children's school work.
4. Getting parents to cooperate on such matters as children's appearance, cleanliness, attendance, discipline, etc.

Problems of Working with the Exceptional Child

1. Helping emotionally retarded children.
2. Dealing with children who are extremely nervous or hypersensitive.
3. Dealing with children who have limited vocabulary and speech patterns.
4. Helping children who daydream most of the time.

Problems of Providing for Individual Differences

1. Working with children with reading difficulties.
2. Finding methods for teaching children unprepared for grade level work because of immaturity, lack of experience, or low ability.
3. Finding time for individual instruction.

Problems of Child-to-child Relationships

1. Handling children who hit another for no obvious reason.
2. Dealing with children who are destructive of other children's property.
3. Helping children with social adjustment problems.

Problems of Building Skills in Independent Work

1. Getting children to do homework or classwork properly.
2. Helping children to work independently.

Problems of School Conditions

1. Dealing with classroom interruptions and disruptions of the normal schedule.

Problems of the Child Self and Self-concept

1. Helping children to realize their own capabilities or limitations.

APPENDIX B
TABLE I

SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS REPORTED BY MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF 287 CLASSROOM TEACHERS AS OCCURRING MOST FREQUENTLY AND BEING MOST SERIOUS

PROBLEM STATEMENT	Percentage Reported by Frequency 1	Rank Order By Frequency 2	Percentage Reported by Severity 3	Rank Order By Severity 4	Occurring in Frequency and Severity 5
1. Lack of appropriate reading materials in the home.	73.9	1	72.1	1	X
2. Working with children with reading difficulties.	67.6	2	67.6	2	X
3. Dealing with children who have limited vocabulary and speech patterns.	60.6	3	63.8	3	X
4. Inability of children to express in writing what they can express orally.	57.5	4	57.5	9	X
5. Dealing with children who don't listen to, remember, and follow instructions (tests, homework, etc.)	55.8	5	59.6	6	X
6. Finding time for individual instruction.	51.2	6	59.9	5	X
7. Lack of materials in the home available to children for doing their homework or school work (e.g., pencil, paper).	49.5	7	51.2	15	X
8. Dealing with children who have limited or unsatisfactory experiences outside school.	48.8	8	56.4	10	X
9. Dealing with parents not interested in their children's classwork.	46.3	9	61.3	4	X
10. Helping a child who comes from a disruptive or broken home.	46.0	10	58.9	7	X
11. Helping a child with social adjustment problems.	39.0	11	47.4	18	X
12. Having difficulty contacting parents and/or scheduling conferences.	38.7	12	53.3	13	X
13. Children coming to school without proper food or sleep.	38.7	13	57.8	8	X
14. Helping children keep track of their school supplies and personal possessions.	38.3	14			
15. Dealing with children not motivated to work.	36.6	15	52.3	14	X
16. Getting students to do homework and classwork properly	36.2	16	40.4	28	X
17. Finding methods for teaching children who are immature, lacking in experience, or who have low ability.	36.2	17	49.8	16	X
18. Helping children work independently.	36.2	18			
19. Finding satisfactory methods of disciplining children.	35.2	19	42.5	24	X
20. Dealing with a constantly disruptive child.	35.2	20	54.7	11	X
21. Dealing with children who do not care if they receive poor grades.	35.2	21	54.0	12	X
22. Dealing with classroom interruptions and disruptions of the normal schedule	34.5	22			

PROBLEM STATEMENT	Percentage Reported by Frequency	Rank Order By Frequency	Percentage Reported by Severity	Rank Order By Severity	Occurring in Frequency and Severity
23. Dealing with children who want attention and will do anything to get it.	34.1	23	49.5	17	X
24. Getting children to do their own work.	33.4	24	34.1	42	X
25. Helping children who suffer from overcrowded, cramped home conditions, (e.g., lack of space for study, poor sleeping arrangements.)			47.4	19	
26. Helping emotionally retarded children.			47.0	20	
27. Eliminating cheating, lying, or stealing.			46.3	21	
28. Dealing with children who are extremely nervous or hypersensitive.			44.9	22	
29. Dealing with parents who won't respond to teacher or school notes, messages, or report cards.			44.6	23	
30. Children associating with other children who are a poor influence			41.8	25	
31. Helping children unprepared for grade level work due to poor teaching methods in early grades			41.8	26	
32. Dealing with children who deliberately try to upset the teacher by misbehaving.			40.8	27	
33. Getting parents to cooperate on such matters as children's appearance, cleanliness, attendance, discipline, etc.			39.0	29	
34. Dealing with children who are destructive of other children's property.			37.6	30	
35. Dealing with the child who is upset by some home incident before coming to school.			37.6	31	
36. Helping a child realize his own capabilities and limitations.			37.3	32	
37. Dealing with a child who rebels against the teacher.			37.3	33	
38. Knowing what to do about children who have been mistreated at home.			36.9	34	
39. Helping parents who say that they can't control their children at home.			36.9	35	
40. Getting children to keep clean and to take an interest in their personal appearance.			36.9	36	
41. Handling children who won't obey teacher directions or orders.			36.6	37	
42. Child hitting another for no obvious reason.			35.5	39	
43. Helping the child who daydreams most of the time.			35.2	40	
44. Students misbehaving when left unsupervised for short periods of time.			34.1	43	
45. Children refusing or otherwise finding ways to get out of doing class work.			33.4	44	

APPENDIX B
TABLE II

CHI-SQUARE VALUES FOR NINETY-SIX SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS FROM THE TEACHER PROBLEM INVENTORY

x^2(2d.f.) = 9.21
Only problems significant at 0.01 given

PROBLEM STATEMENT	Column 1 Frequency x^2	Column 2 Severity x^2	Column 3 Both
1. Having trouble eliminating repeated child absences or tardiness.	53.14	41.19	X
2. Audio-visual equipment either not available or not functioning properly.	9.72		
3. Children arriving at school wet or staying home because of inclement weather.	57.35	31.28	X
4. Children associating with other children who are a poor influence.	41.64	46.40	X
5. Helping a child who comes from a disruptive or broken home.	77.41	88.21	X
6. Dealing with the child who is upset by some home incident before coming to school.	58.37	57.17	X
7. Knowing what to do about children who have been mistreated at home.	11.64	14.90	X
8. Helping a child with social adjustment problems.	82.38	73.41	X
9. Helping children who do not have adequate clothing.	18.56		
10. Getting parents to cooperate on such matters as children's appearance, cleanliness, attendance, discipline, etc.	53.13	36.90	X
11. Explaining to parents that their children have serious school-related problems.	28.06	30.71	X
12. Students misbehaving when left unsupervised for short periods of time.	54.36	45.08	X
13. Handling discipline problems or disturbance caused by children not in my class.	32.84	20.45	X
14. Teaching children to share equipment.	11.21	23.11	X
15. Helping children who are afraid to leave school because they fear bodily harm by others.	29.46	14.35	X
16. Finding satisfactory methods of disciplining children.	40.21	37.40	X
17. Eliminating cheating, lying, or stealing.	43.94	48.22	X
18. Maintaining order while class is moving in halls.	13.72	12.03	X
19. Helping the child who daydreams most of the time.	35.16	26.40	X
20. Involving most students in class discussions (e.g., not permitting one student to dominate the discussion).	16.06	18.63	X
21. Getting children to do their own work.	64.28	50.15	X
22. Children refusing or otherwise finding ways to get out of doing class work	45.45	25.89	X

PROBLEM STATEMENT	Column 1 Frequency x^2	Column 2 Severity x^2	Column 3 Both
23. Dealing with children who feel that teachers are against them. .	16.19		
24. Dealing with children who want attention and will do anything to get it.	64.74	66.90	X
25. Helping children work independently.	51.15	26.44	X
26. Students eating or chewing gum in class.	48.23	15.49	X
27. Dealing with children who fake illness to escape punishment or to avoid school work	13.89	13.29	X
28. Helping children to line up properly.	15.17	10.09	X
29. Helping emotionally retarded children.		31.35	
30. Handling students who want to play disciplinarian for the rest of the class.	13.34	20.54	X
31. Dealing with classroom interruptions and disruptions of the normal schedule.	59.04	26.83	X
32. Helping children keep track of their school supplies and personal possessions.	56.07	20.29	X
33. Helping children settle down to work when they arrive in the morning or after transfer from another classroom.	13.54	15.88	X
34. Dealing with attachment by child to a teacher as a result of rejection and/or lack of affection at home.	13.87	9.35	X
35. Dealing with children who are extremely nervous or hypersensitive.	22.72	35.77	X
36. Getting children to keep clean and to take an interest in their personal appearance.	46.99	40.83	X
37. Child becoming very upset when he does not perform up to peer group expectations, (e.g., playing games in gym).	23.96	12.15	X
38. Dealing with children who do not care if they receive poor grades.	43.92	64.61	X
39. Dealing with children who are destructive of other students' property.	34.78	34.98	X
40. Handling children who won't obey teacher directions or orders.	34.64	27.56	X
41. Lack of materials in the home available to children for doing their homework or school work (e.g., pencil, paper).	64.95	51.64	X
42. Lack of appropriate reading materials in the home.	187.44	135.99	X
43. Dealing with parents not interested in their children's classwork.	57.31	81.01	X
44. Having difficulty contacting parents and/or scheduling conferences.	53.67	72.24	X
45. Handling child illnesses such as vomiting in classroom	28.03		
46. Students throwing or shooting objects in class.	27.00	29.75	X

PROBLEM STATEMENT	Column 1 Frequency x^2	Column 2 Severity x^2	Column 3 Both
47. Preventing one student from causing another student physical harm.	22.62	11.78	X
48. Helping children who suffer from overcrowded, cramped home conditions (e.g., lack of space for study, poor sleeping arrangements).	20.69	36.23	X
49. Dealing with children who are limited or unsatisfactory.	91.03	85.11	X
50. Dealing with children who have limited vocabulary and speech patterns.	132.48	111.22	X
51. Helping children overcome fear of trying something new.	10.27	12.13	X
52. Children copying misbehavior or inattentiveness of another child.	28.22	31.52	X
53. Dealing with a child who rebels against the teacher.	19.26	16.70	X
54. Getting students to do homework and classwork properly	57.76	55.16	X
55. Dealing with children who deliberately try to upset the teacher by misbehaving.	24.47	26.15	X
56. Working with children with reading difficulties	149.94	109.88	X
57. Inability of children to express in writing what they can express orally.	99.66	70.70	X
58. Dealing with a constantly disruptive child.	33.90	58.44	X
59. Controlling outbursts of fighting, aggressiveness, or over-competitiveness	14.20	12.67	X
60. Students not paying attention during assembly and creating discipline problems.	12.41	15.49	X
61. Working with children who become frustrated and destroy their work or school equipment.	12.41		
62. Child hitting another for no obvious reason.	39.75	42.68	X
63. Inability of children in differentiating between fact and fantasy.	15.83	15.14	X
64. Overcoming half-truths or misconceptions fostered by parental influence.	16.08	10.23	X
65. Getting students to use good manners when eating.	16.10		
66. Children misbehaving when they go alone to the lavoratory or to another class	34.45	32.72	X
67. Dealing with children who don't listen to, remember, and follow instructions (tests, homework, etc.)	125.19	114.36	X
68. Helping the class to maintain composure under unusual circumstances (fire drills, visitors in class, accidents).	32.79	20.39	X
69. Helping children unprepared for grade level work due to poor teaching methods in early grades.	13.75	21.69	X
70. Helping children to understand and practice acceptable classroom behavior.	52.58	25.10	X

PROBLEM STATEMENT	Column 1 Frequency x^2	Column 2 Severity x^2	Column 3 Both
71. Finding methods to reduce restlessness during inclement weather.		17.70	
72. Finding time for individual instruction.	88.90	79.75	X
73. Unable to complete classwork scheduled for the day.	39.48	23.27	X
74. Being too tired to operate efficiently	21.93		
75. Being asked to perform tasks usually classified as "professional" duties (e.g., filling out survey reports).	14.15		
76. Children coming to school without proper food or sleep.	72.82	88.21	X
77. Children reading library books or drawing during a teaching period.	14.45		
78. Determining whether students who claim they are ill are telling the truth.	19.80	22.78	X
79. Children messing their clothing and work area when using art materials.	13.40		
80. Handling children who are overdemanding of the teacher's attention.	32.00	18.47	X
81. Helping children who are afraid of failure.	19.87	9.86	X
82. Finding ways to encourage cooperation within the classroom	26.46	17.24	X
83. Integrating the isolated child.	32.83	10.60	X
84. Reaching the apathetic child.	10.99		
85. Helping a child realize his own capabilities and limitations.	47.80	30.44	X
86. Pupil being reluctant to talk with teacher concerning problems.	16.88	15.81	X
87. Difficulty understanding attitudes and values of the child.	22.64		
88. Finding methods for teaching children who are immature, lacking in experience, or who have low ability.	45.63	46.90	X
89. Dealing with children not motivated to work.	79.31	76.44	X
90. Having children do independent or group work quietly.	28.76	10.02	X
91. Helping students who are inconsiderate of others.	39.63	24.49	X
92. Dealing with problems created when it is necessary to change the seating changes.	11.20		
93. Dealing with an over-possessive child who demands more than his share (e.g., food, paper, toys and other material things).	13.88	9.56	X
94. Finding appropriate instructional materials and situations that deal with the child's background.	11.16		
95. Dealing with parents who won't respond to teacher or school notes, messages or report cards.	14.14	27.39	X
96. Helping parents who say that they can't control their children at home.	9.73	12.79	X

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